

superior the French King was kept alive by our aid. These very limited operations, though less absurdly out of proportion to our resources than the attempt to hold a third of France, were still a strain on our finances which proved unendurable to the taxpayer and prevented the revival of prosperity. Further, the command of the sea being lost, the Spanish and French fleets made continual descents on the English coast towns, with results fatal to our shipping and commerce. This miserable state of things continued for ten years more, before we could learn to swallow our pride and submit to treat with the enemy. The decline in trade, the heavy war taxation, the failure and disgrace of the English arms and policy, are conditions which continue without relief throughout the period covered by the ensuing chapters. Such conditions add bitterness to party strife, and lie underneath much of the political, social and religious agitation. Hard times and national disgrace have often aided men to reconsider an unthinking acceptance of the institutions of their country and the intellectual beliefs of their age.

Probably the new ministers were not more to blame for these disasters than the Bishops whom they had succeeded. England had undertaken a task beyond her strength. The loss of the land was Inevitable from exhaustion of men and money and from the loss of the sea. The loss of the sea appears to have been the result not of mismanagement only, but of real Inferiority In maritime power. At the battle of Eochelle (1872), a defeat almost as signal as the victory of Sluys thirty years before, the capture of Pembroke's ships was only the assertion of a superiority already recognised. The House of Commons had already called attention to the decay of the mercantile marine from economic causes prior to the war,¹ and as the fighting fleet was at that time composed of merchant ships seized for the King's service, the decline of the marine was tantamount to the decline of the navy.

But although the faults of the ministers were not the sole cause of the disasters that befel their country, there was gross

¹ *Bot. ParL*, ii. 806, see. 81; 0. 811 and lit 6, sec* 17.